

ELTON JOHN
GREATEST HITS
1970-2002



CD ONE

- 01: YOUR SONG
- 02: LEVON
- 03: TINY DANCER
- 04: ROCKET MAN (I THINK IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG, LONG TIME)
- 05: HONKY CAT
- 06: CROCODILE ROCK
- 07: DANIEL
- 08: SATURDAY NIGHT'S ALRIGHT FOR FIGHTING
- 09: GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD
- 10: CANDLE IN THE WIND
- 11: BENNIE AND THE JETS
- 12: DON'T LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON ME
- 13: THE BITCH IS BACK
- 14: PHILADELPHIA FREEDOM
- 15: SOMEONE SAVED MY LIFE TONIGHT
- 16: ISLAND GIRL
- 17: SORRY SEEMS TO BE THE HARDEST WORD

CD TWO

- 01: DON'T GO BREAKING MY HEART (WITH KIKI DEE)
- 02: LITTLE JEANNIE
- 03: I'M STILL STANDING
- 04: I GUESS THAT'S WHY THEY CALL IT THE BLUES
- 05: SAD SONGS (SAY SO MUCH)
- 06: I DON'T WANNA GO ON WITH YOU LIKE THAT
- 07: NIKITA
- 08: SACRIFICE
- 09: THE ONE
- 10: CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE TONIGHT?
- 11: CIRCLE OF LIFE
- 12: BELIEVE
- 13: BLESSED
- 14: SOMETHING ABOUT THE WAY YOU LOOK TONIGHT
- 15: WRITTEN IN THE STARS (WITH LEANN RIMES)
- 16: I WANT LOVE
- 17: THIS TRAIN DON'T STOP THERE ANYMORE



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Fabulous
Gorgeous
ELTON JOHN
In double page

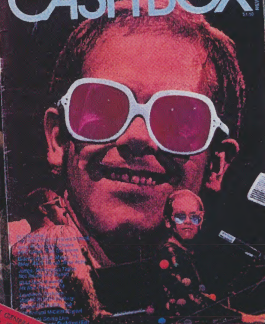
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ELTON JOHN
GREATEST HITS
1970-2002



ELTON JOHN GREATEST HITS 1970-2002

When John Lennon gave his first interview after the break-up of the Beatles, he said the first new sound that had captured his interest was that of Elton John singing "Your Song". By the time he finally met the ascending artist, he was completely captivated. Welcoming Elton off a plane in Los Angeles, Lennon knelt on the ground before him, chanting "No, no, it's him, it's him, it's Elton!" The younger man was, of course, as embarrassed as he was touched. He had worshipped the Beatles as much as any teenage musician of the Sixties. "Get up off the floor," he thought, "you're John Lennon!"

This is not just an amusing reminiscence of When John Met John. In an unintended way, Lennon was indicating his approval of the passing of the baton from the world's favourite British group to its most successful British soloist. The Beatles departed the American singles chart at the end of July 1970. Elton John first appeared the next month.

Whereas the Beatles packed their historic and unmatched career into one decade, Elton has

continued to flourish and surprise, bestriding several decades with both artistic achievement and commercial success. He has had the good fortune of being the front man for the collected efforts of a group of extremely talented and loyal individuals, the most important of whom is his lyricist Bernie Taupin, and he has had the good sense to cherish these relationships.

Having famously met through an advertisement in the *New Musical Express* in the late Sixties, Elton and Bernie started writing and haven't stopped. Taupin, a country boy who came to the big city with equally big dreams, was perfect for John, a London lad who felt ordinary and needed dreams. It wasn't their differences that was important in their success, it was their shared enthusiasms. They loved American records, they loved to tell musical stories, and they were, in their own ways, deeply romantic. They were, as Elton has often said, like brothers, with distinct personalities but an unspoken and unbreakable bond.

Taupin was talented, plain and simple. He was one of those people who shouldn't exist but thank God does, untrained but naturally gifted. Driving

home one night, he thought "She packed my bags last night pre-flight, zero hour 9 AM". By the time he was home he had written "Rocket Man" in his head. He sent the words off to Elton, who turned the blank verse into a catchy and coherent pop song. How they do it even they don't really know, but they do, over and over. Much has been made of Elton's ability to write musical hooks, the catchy and repeated parts of a song that stay in the listener's head. More should be made of Bernie's hooks. His subjects are ones to which an audience can immediately respond, whether they be an astronaut, Marilyn Monroe, or the universal search for "The One." The lyricist's memorable themes are given the composer's unforgettable music. The highlights of their first thirty-two years of hits are on this album.

Thirty-two years... that doesn't even include two earlier years of struggle. Theirs is a songwriting partnership that has not only defied time, it has shattered the longevity rules of popular music. Almost all the most accomplished teams, including Bacharach and David, Holland-Dozier-Holland, and Lennon and McCartney, were together for less than one decade. Elton and Bernie are on their fourth.



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Left to right:
Davey Johnstone, Dee Murray,
Elton John, Bernie Taupin,
Nigel Olsson, Ray Cooper

The first of these two compact discs contains seventeen major hits from the period 1970-76. During these years Elton had a mind-numbing fifteen hit albums, including seven consecutive US number ones, a string exceeded only by the Beatles. One of these number ones, *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, was a double album.

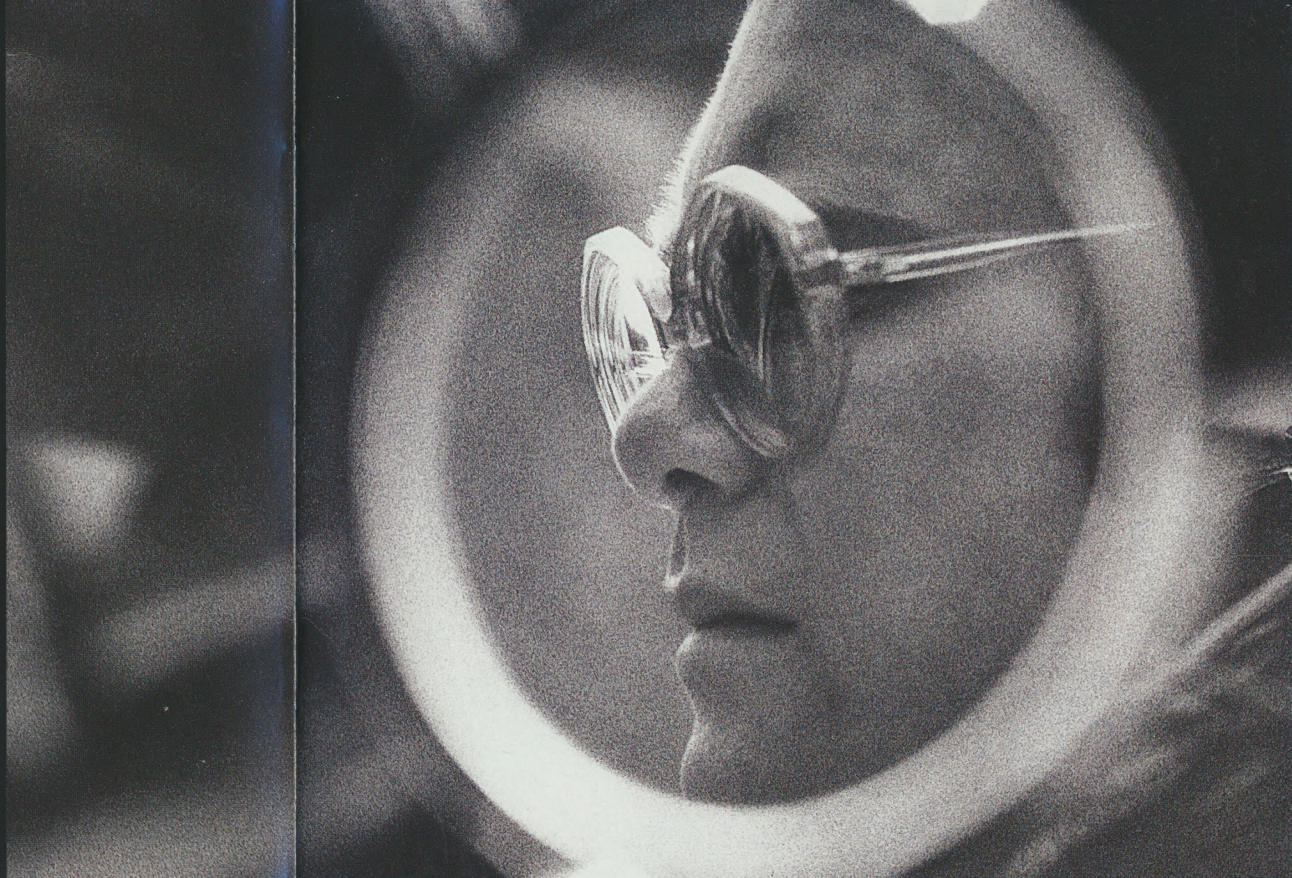
It might seem like Elton and Bernie were trying to break some productivity record, but in fact they had to turn the LPs out quickly. Their contract with their first company required them to deliver two albums a year. In the early Seventies major artists did release at least one a year. The heavy workload had the unintended benefit of keeping them in musical shape. Just as athletes require exercise to stay in condition, performers have to work to stay at their best. Without realizing they were doing it, Taupin and John were refining their craft and outdistancing their peers. With the solid support of their band and producer Gus Dudgeon, they flew higher and higher until Elton was the most popular star in America.

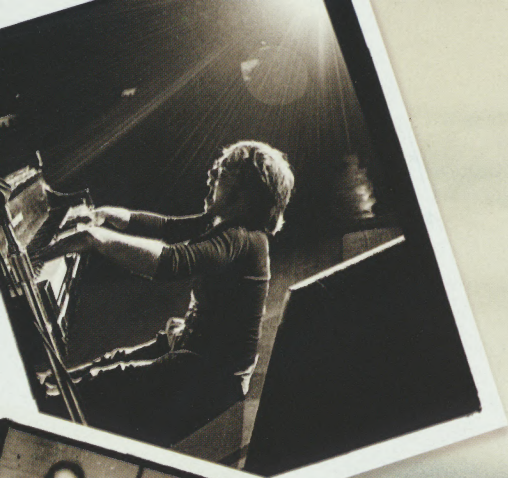
They were so full of ideas they survived the release of four --- count 'em, four --- albums in 1971, a

parade of product that would have exhausted the supporters of almost any artist. From this pile of plastic "Tiny Dancer" has survived as an exquisite love song. Although it was inspired by Bernie's girlfriend of the time, it speaks for any captivated young lover, and was used to great effect in Cameron Crowe's film *Almost Famous*.

The singles from the 1972 album *Honky Chateau*, "Rocket Man" and "Honky Cat", established the pattern of alternating ballad and up-tempo numbers that would see Elton through the next few years. This way no one grew tired of his domination of the airwaves, and he and Bernie could write a full range of material. From *Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only The Piano Player*, "Crocodile Rock", Elton's first American number one, was a stylistic homage to the rock and roll artists he loved, while the follow-up "Daniel" was a reflective ballad about a one-eyed war veteran who could only find peace in Spain. (Its specific meaning was lost because Elton omitted Bernie's last verse, leaving the remaining words open to misinterpretation.)

The classic *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* album generated four major



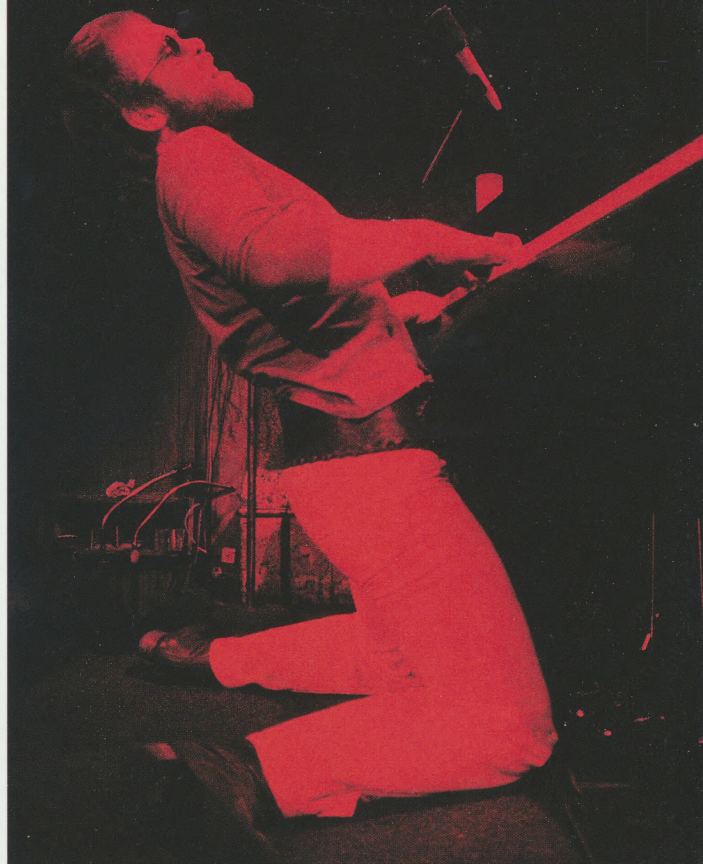


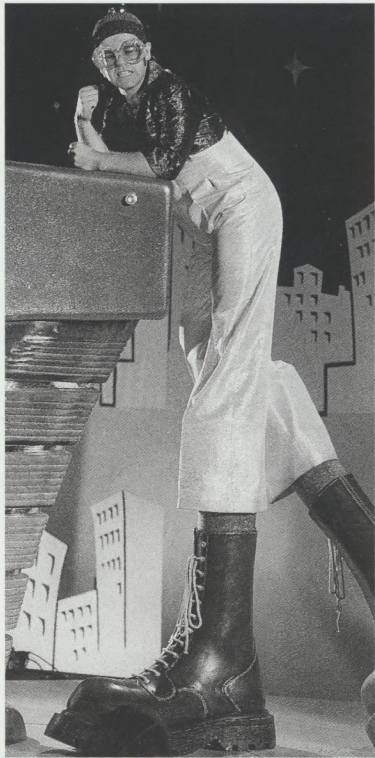


hits. It would have yielded more had the current practice of mining albums for hit singles been in vogue in the early Seventies. As it was, "Harmony", at one point the most-played track on US top forty radio, remained on the album. "Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting", released before the LP, became a concert favourite and an Elton anthem. The title track itself became a top ten single and "Bennie and the Jets" an American number one that crossed over to the R&B chart, a feat that meant the world to black music fanatic Elton. He was thrilled by the opportunity to appear on Soul Train.

It was "Candle In The Wind" that came to be the quintessential John-Taupin composition, chosen one of the *Songs Of The Century* in a BBC poll. This song has the distinction of being the only piece to be a hit single in three different versions by the same artist in three consecutive decades, each one more popular than the last. The 1970s success was the studio version from *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, the 1980s hit was a live performance recorded in Australia, and a 1990s charity single was, of course, a tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales, with lyrics rewritten by Bernie Taupin. This release overtook "White Christmas" by Bing Crosby to become the best-selling single of all-time. Just before the original version was recorded, Bernie said he thought it was the best song the duo had written.

"It's my favourite song, it means a lot to me," he explained. "I put a lot of feeling into that song, the sentiment is how I feel, and I think the





melodic treatment of it really suits the mood. I think when we actually get down to recording it it's going to be the best thing we've ever done."

"Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me" became another standard, a hit in its original version from *Caribou* and an international number one in a duet with George Michael in 1991. *Caribou* was originally going to be called *The Bitch Is Back* after another planned single, but friends feared it would appear that Elton was jumping on the glam rock bandwagon.

The successive hits "Bennie And The Jets" and "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me" each were well over five minutes in duration. So was the John-Taupin team's tribute to Billie Jean King's tennis squad, the Philadelphia Freedoms. Elton was regularly breaking the customary three-and-a-half-minute sound barrier, but in his case radio was happy to overlook his transgressions. Indeed, he was so popular with the mass audience that programmers looked for as many EJ hits they could find, including the Beatles tribute "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" and the *Tommy* soundtrack cut "Pinball Wizard".

Rock critics of the era tried to ignore Elton's position as America's favourite star. After all, he did not represent social

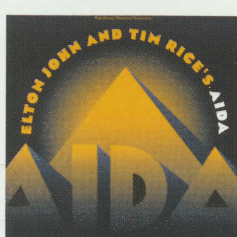
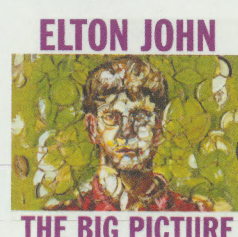
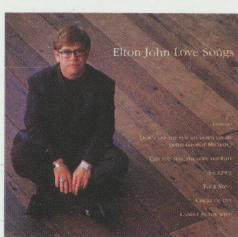
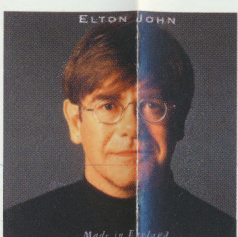
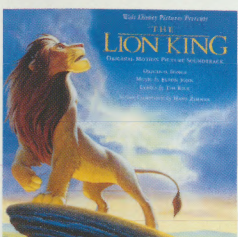
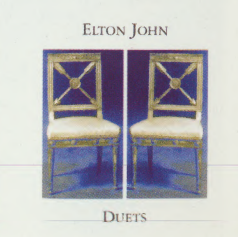
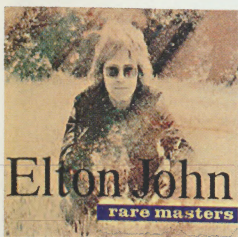
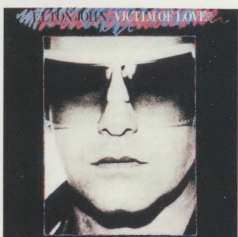
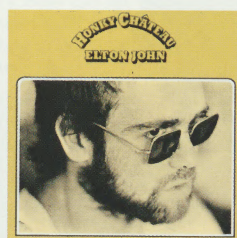
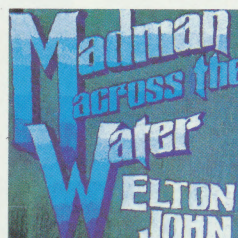
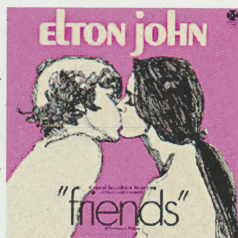
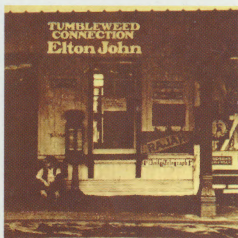
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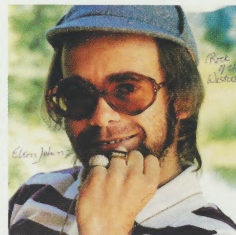
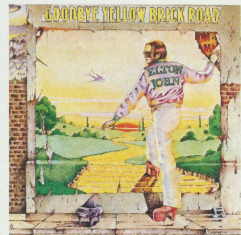
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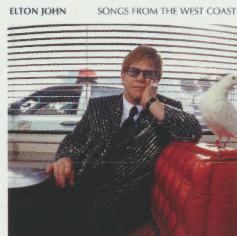
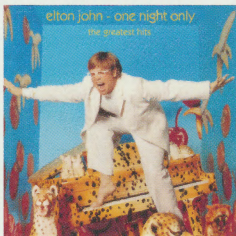
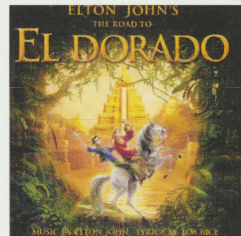
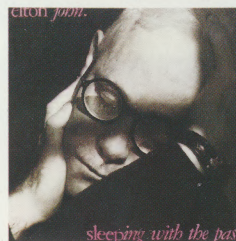
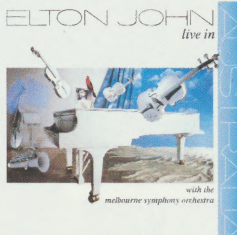
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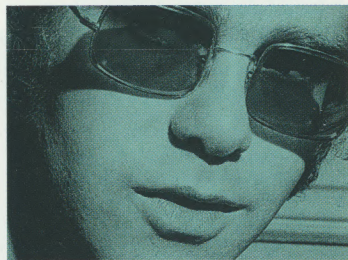
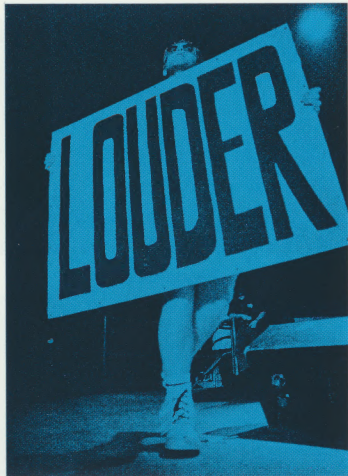
ELTON JOHN

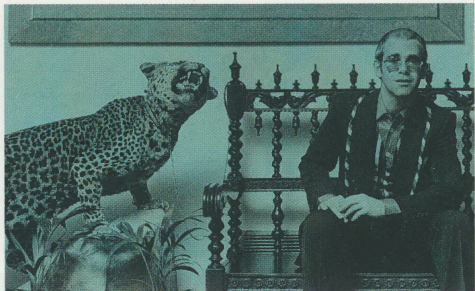


1. EMPTY SKY 1969
2. ELTON JOHN 1970
3. TUMBLEWEED CONNECTION 1970
4. 17-11-70 (11-17-70) 1971
5. FRIENDS (OS) 1971
6. MADMAN ACROSS THE WATER 1971
7. HONKY CHATEAU 1972
8. DON'T SHOOT ME I'M ONLY THE PIANO PLAYER 1973
9. GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD 1973
10. CARIBOU 1974
11. GREATEST HITS 1974
12. CAPTAIN FANTASTIC AND THE BROWN DIRT COWBOY 1975
13. ROYAL OF THE WESTIES 1975
14. HERE AND THERE 1976

15. BLUE MOVES 1976
16. GREATEST HITS VOLUME 2 1977
17. A SINGLE MAN 1978
18. VICTIM OF LOVE 1979
19. 21 AT 33 1980
20. THE FOX 1981
21. JUMP UP 1982
22. TOO LOW FOR ZERO 1983
23. BREAKING HEARTS 1984
24. ICE ON FIRE 1985
25. LEATHER JACKETS 1986
26. LIVE IN AUSTRALIA WITH THE MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA 1987
27. REG STRIKES BACK 1988

28. SLEEPING WITH THE PAST 1989
29. THE VERY BEST OF ELTON JOHN 1990
30. THE ONE 1992
31. RARE MASTERS 1992
32. DUETS 1993
33. THE LION KING (OS) 1994
34. MADE IN ENGLAND 1995
35. LOVE SONGS 1995
36. THE BIG PICTURE 1997
37. ELTON JOHN AND TIM RICE'S AIDA 1999
38. THE MUSE (OS) 1999
39. THE ROAD TO EL DORADO (OS) 2000
40. ONE NIGHT ONLY 2000
41. SONGS FROM THE WEST COAST 2001







rebellion or personal angst, favourite topics of writers looking for social relevance in popular music. Yet it was precisely because Elton John was great fun and guaranteed to give a good time in concert that Americans loved him. They were living through the era of Nixon, Vietnam and Watergate, and they desperately needed a break from relentlessly unpleasant daily news. He could not have been more socially relevant! At one point his discs accounted for two percent of the world's record sales.

When Elton and Bernie released their autobiographical album *Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy*,

chronicling events in their lives before their first hit, it became the first album to debut at number one in the American LP chart. The follow-up, *Rock Of The Westies*, repeated the feat. Nowadays, with speeded-up sales returns, it is customary for major albums to enter at number one, but Elton did it not only first but first and second.

"Someone Saved My Life Tonight", the nearly seven-minute single from *Captain Fantastic*, was a perfect example of Taupin's ability to express Elton's emotions. Bernie took the perspective of Elton on the evening of what EJ called "my Woody Allen suicide attempt", when he turned on the gas and left the windows open.



(The "someone" was Long John Baldry, who convinced Elton he should not marry his intended.) This song sounds like a genuine straight-from-the-heart first person account. There is no distance between the lyricist and the vocalist.

Writing under pseudonyms, the duo came up with "Don't Go Breaking My Heart", a 1976 worldwide number one for Elton and Kiki Dee. But Bernie was undergoing a stressful time in his personal life, and that year's double album, *Blue Moves*, was full of bleak sentiments. It was while giving a concert to promote that LP at Wembley Arena that an emotional and exhausted Elton spontaneously announced "That's it, this is the last one." He didn't say for how long, but he was serious. He temporarily left the scene.

When he returned to album action two years later, Elton changed his regimen. He released recordings at less frequent intervals. He temporarily worked with different producers and writers. In the case of "Song For Guy", a tribute to the deceased Rocket Records bike boy, only one line of words was necessary.

Elton and Bernie returned to peak form together on the 1983 album *Too Low For Zero*, which included what has become another Elton John anthem, "I'm Still Standing", the top ten hit "I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues" and the rocking "Kiss The Bride." Although EJ went through a period of well-documented personal problems, he managed to extract a major hit single from almost every album he released during the Eighties, most notably "Sad Songs (Say So Much)", "Nikita" and "I Don't Wanna Go On With You Like That."

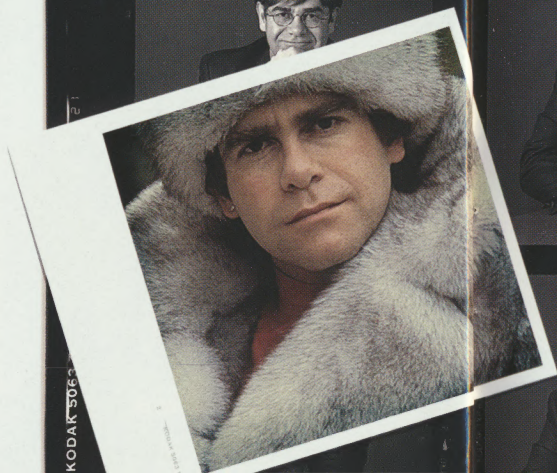
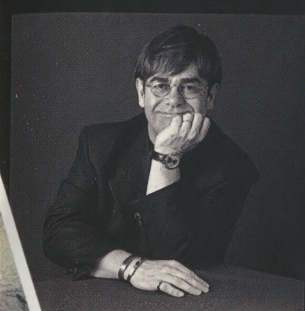
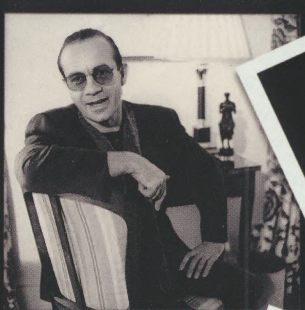
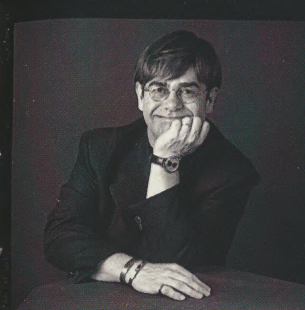


Pulling himself together for the Nineties, Elton enjoyed a new decade of triumphs. In 1990 he finally registered his first UK solo number one, "Sacrifice". In late 1991 in Britain, early 1992 in America, he led the list with the George Michael duet. Later in 1992 he enjoyed international top ten placings with his single and album *The One*. The title track established a seemingly unbeatable record: Elton John had reached the American top forty for the 23rd consecutive year, surpassing the 22 year streak of Elvis Presley. For the remainder of the Nineties, chartologists bit their nails each year until Elton reached the top forty. Would he hit a round 30 years? He did so in 1999 with the gold single "Written In The Stars", a duet with LeAnn Rimes.

This latter song came from the Tony Award-winning musical *Elton John And Tim Rice's Aida*. Just as Bernie Taupin strayed from Elton during the Eighties to co-write number one hits for Jefferson Starship ("We Built This City") and Heart ("These Dreams"), John accepted the invitation of Tim Rice to collaborate on the music for the Disney film *The Lion King*. When the soundtrack became the world number one for the year 1994, a follow-up was demanded. Both *The Lion King and Aida* continue their long runs on Broadway.

After the 1995 album *Made In England*, Elton and Bernie experienced the record sale of the double A-side "Candle in the Wind 1997" and "Something About The Way You Look Tonight" from *The Big Picture*. Together they shared critical acclaim in 2001 for their album *Songs From The West Coast*. Whereas for years Bernie had sent Elton his lyrics through the mail, the songwriting partners now actually created together in person. The results, which showed maturity and depth, included the

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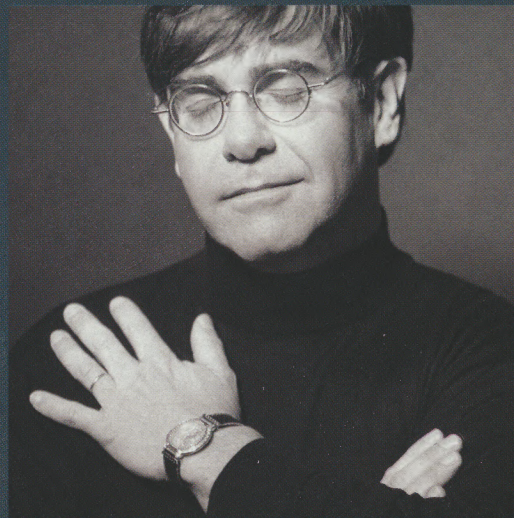
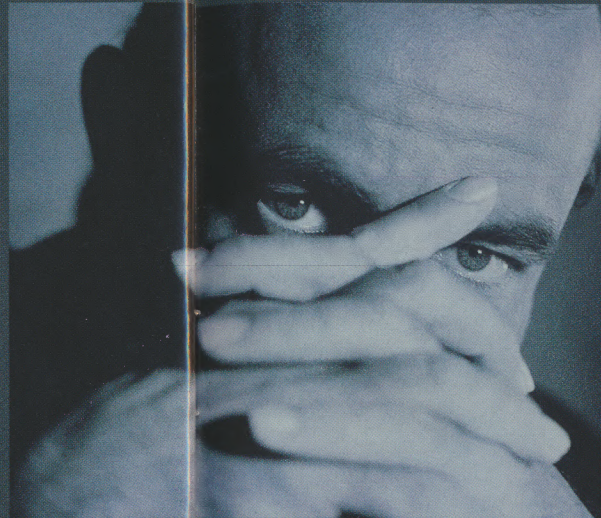
Grammy-nominated "I Want Love" and "This Train Don't Stop There Anymore".

Long-time fans treasured the reaffirmation of an important partnership. Young listeners discovered it. For over thirty years, whether they have individually been Elton John the philanthropist, Bernie Taupin the poet, Elton the football chairman or Bernie the restaurateur, these two men have been popular music's longest-lived prolific songwriting team. This is what they do best. The rest has turned out to be just what they thought it would when they did their autobiographical album in 1975.

"Bernie spends all his time out West now," Elton says with wonder. "He keeps going to rodeos. He really has become the Brown Dirt Cowboy."

"And, of course," he adds with mischief in his eyes, "I am Captain Fantastic."





CD ONE

01: YOUR SONG

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
Published by Universal - PolyGram International
Publishing, Inc. (ASCAP)
© 1969 This Record Company Ltd.
From the album *Elton John*

02: LEVON

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
Published by Universal - PolyGram International
Publishing, Inc. (ASCAP)
© 1971 This Record Company Ltd.
From the album *Madman Across The Water*

03: TINY DANCER

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
Published by Universal - PolyGram International
Publishing, Inc. (ASCAP)
© 1971 This Record Company Ltd.
From the album *Madman Across The Water*

CD TWO

01: DON'T GO BREAKING MY HEART
(WITH KIKI DEE)

Music by Ann Orion, Lyrics by Carte Blanche
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
Published by Happenstance Ltd./Rouge Boozie, Inc.
(Administered by Warner/Chappell Music)
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02: LITTLE JEANNIE

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Gary Osborne
Produced by Clive Franks and Elton John
Published by Happenstance Ltd./Big Pig Music Ltd.
(Administered by Warner/Chappell Music)
© 1979 Mercury Records Ltd.
From the album *21 At 33*

03: I'M STILL STANDING

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Chris Thomas
Published by Happenstance Ltd./Rouge Boozie, Inc.
(Administered by Warner/Chappell Music)
© 1983 Mercury Records Ltd.
From the album *Too Low For Zero*

04: ROCKET MAN
(I THINK IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG, LONG TIME)

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
Published by Universal - PolyGram International
Publishing, Inc. (ASCAP)
© 1972 This Record Company Ltd.
From the album *Honky Chateau*

05: HONKY CAT

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
Published by Universal - PolyGram International
Publishing, Inc. (ASCAP)
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From the album *Honky Chateau*

06: CROCODILE ROCK

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
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From the album *Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player*

07: DANIEL

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
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08: SATURDAY NIGHT'S ALRIGHT FOR FIGHTING

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
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From the album *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*

09: GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
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From the album *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*

07: NIKITA

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
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From the album *Ice On Fire*

08: SACRIFICE

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Chris Thomas
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From the album *Sleeping With The Past*

09: THE ONE

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Chris Thomas
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10: CANDLE IN THE WIND

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
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From the album *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*

11: BENNIE AND THE JETS

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From the album *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*

12: DON'T LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON ME

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
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From the album *Caribou*

10: CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE TONIGHT?

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Tim Rice
Produced by Chris Thomas
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From the album *The Lion King* (OS)

11: CIRCLE OF LIFE

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Tim Rice
Produced by Chris Thomas
Published by Wonderland Music Company, Inc.
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From the album *The Lion King* (OS)

12: BELIEVE

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Greg Penny and Elton John
Published by William A. Bong Ltd./Hania
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From the album *Made In England*

13: THE BITCH IS BACK

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
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From the album *Caribou*

14: PHILADELPHIA FREEDOM

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
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15: SOMEONE SAVED MY LIFE TONIGHT

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
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From the album *Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy*

13: BLESSED

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14: SOMETHING ABOUT THE WAY YOU LOOK TONIGHT

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From the album *The Big Picture*

15: WRITTEN IN THE STARS (WITH LEANN RIMES)

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Tim Rice
Produced by Peter Collins and Willou Rimes
Executive Producer: Phil Romano
Published by Wonderland Music Company, Inc./
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From the album *Elton John And Tim Rice's Aid*

16: ISLAND GIRL

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
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From the album *Rock Of The Westies*

17: SORRY SEEMS TO BE THE HARDEST WORD

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Gus Dudgeon
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From the album *Blue Moves*

16: I WANT LOVE

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Produced by Patrick Leonard
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From the album *Songs From The West Coast*

17: THIS TRAIN DON'T STOP THERE ANYMORE

Music by Elton John, Lyrics by Taupin
Produced by Patrick Leonard
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From the album *Songs From The West Coast*

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